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Guatemala Media Tour Puts a Face on the Global Fight Against Hunger

Guatemala has the largest population in Central America (14 million people); it is rich in fertile land and natural resources, yet 53 percent of the population lives in poverty, 13 percent in extreme poverty. Most of these are rural indigenous people, many of Maya descent, who make up about 40 percent of the population. It is they who are affected more than anyone else by the most tragic consequence of poverty in the country: chronic malnutrition.

The chronic malnutrition rate for children under five in Guatemala is 49.8 percent, the highest in Latin America, and the fourth highest in the world. It increases to 66 percent in the indigenous communities. Chronic malnutrition in young children stunts growth, both physical and mental, and has irreversible consequences on health, education and productivity.

You see it right away. I asked two little girls, who giggled and eyed me shyly, how old they were. "*Cinco*," said the little one in blue, squinting. "*Ocho*," said the older sister, proudly.

"No way," I thought, until I looked into their eyes and saw the (relative) wisdom of a five-year old in a child the height of a two-year old. Mature faces in toddler-size bodies.

[Read the full post on the U.S. Department of State DipNote blog](#)